

Denise and her parents go to the river almost every weekend when the weather is warm. Her parents are expert kayakers, but this is only Denise's second summer paddling a kayak. Her parents have decided Denise is ready for some "big water" and are taking her to the Ocoee River.

Denise is a little nervous as she takes her boat off the car at the put-in. She dresses for the river by putting on a spray jacket over her bathing suit. The water is very cold, and the waterproof jacket helps keep her warm. She pulls her spray skirt around her waist. This makes a waterproof seal when she sits in the cockpit of the boat and pulls the skirt tightly around the rim of cockpit of the boat. After putting on her life jacket and helmet, she pulls her boat to the edge of the water and sits in it with her legs stretched out in front of her. She holds her paddle as someone slides her into the water.

Although she is a little anxious, she remembers to keep paddling smoothly. As she and her family approach the first big rapid, her mother suggests they get out of the boats and walk down the river to look at the rapid. This is called "scouting" a rapid. Paddlers watch the patterns of the water and currents and decide which is the safest way to paddle without flipping over.

They get back into their kayaks. Denise and her father sit in the calm waters of an eddy and watch as her mother runs the rapids. Denise's heart is pounding as she watches her father paddle his way through the rapid. It is her turn. Her parents are sitting in an eddy at the end of the rapid waiting for her to paddle her boat into the fast-moving white water.

She takes a few strokes and turns downstream. As soon as she enters the current, her speed picks up. The first wave of icy wild water rises over the boat and sprays her in the face. "Well, I've made it this far," she coaches herself. "It's not as scary as I thought."

Suddenly, an unexpected wave strikes the side of her boat. The next thing she knows, she is upside-down in the freezing water. After a short panic, she remembers her training and practice. "I've got to roll." She positions her paddle in the water and flips herself upright. Feeling confident after her successful roll, she moves her paddle precisely through the water and runs the rest of the rapid.

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